from the drying yard or premises. Pads should be spread out in thin layer for uniform drying with frequent stirring which is essential for preventing mold growth and discolouration. The material should be heaped and covered by clean gunny bags/tarpaulin at night. When the moisture level in dried chilli pods is below 15%, they should be packed in clean dry gunny bags and stored ensuring protection from dampness. Dunnage has to be provided to stack the packed bags to prevent moisture ingress. Care should be taken to stack the bags 50-60 centimetres away from the wall.

(d) Government has not fixed spice-wise targets for exports. Spices Board has fixed a target of export of 40,000 MT chillies valued at Rs. 160 crores for the year 1996-97.

Trend of Declining Exports

1685. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether various export councils had been consulted on the formulation of policy for enhancing exports in 1996-97;

(b) whether it is a fact that the export policy for 1996-97 has run out of steam;

(c) the reasons for the lacklustre performance of exports in 1996-97; and

(d) the steps proposed to rectify the weaknesses of export policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) to (d) No Sir, the Export Import Policy 1992-97, has provided a conducive atmosphere for export growth which is borne out by the fact that exports have grown in $ terms by 20%, 18% and 21% respectively over die past three years. The main reasons for deceleration of exports during April-Sept., 1996 are deceleration in the rate of global export growth, sharp reduction in the permitted ceiling for rice and wheat exports in view of tighter suppjy conditions in domestic market, fall in the unit price of rough as well as polished diamonds, high cost of export packing credit, and infrastructural inadequacies. Review of the export policy is a continuous process and steps have been initiated to achieve further simplification of the policy and procedure by way of discussions with the trade and industry for formulating the exim policy effective from 1.4.97.

Lock-out in Mafatlai Engineering Industries Ltd., Kalwe, Maharashtra

1686. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of the Plant of M/s Mafatlai Engineering Industries Limited at Kalwe, Thane, Maharashtra which is under lock-out since May, 1989;

(b) whether the Government have taken any action to reopen or revive the said unit;

(c) whether any proposal has been put forward by the employees of the said unit to run it as a co-operative organisation;

(d) the impediments being faced in re-opening the said unit as on date;

(e) whether the management of the said unit moved any petition before any authority to declare it as a sick unit; and

(f) if so, the response from the said authority?

I THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (f) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Voluntary Retirement Scheme in the Coffee Board

1687. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE.be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Coffee Board has decided to introduce Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) for the employees of Coffee Board;

(b) if so, the terms and conditions of the said scheme in detail;

(c) the reasons for introducing such a sens me;

(d) the number of employees who will be affected by the said scheme: and

(e) whether Government are considering extension of implementation of the said scheme so that the benefits of the Vth Pay Commission recommendations can be availed by the employees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SH. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) Yes, Sir. Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) was introduced in Coffee Board during 1994 when Govt, of India granted 30% Internal Sale Quota (ISQ) for the season 1992-93 and 50% Free Sale Quota (FSQ) for the reason 1993-94 to the coffee growers.

(b) The terms and conditions of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme introduced by the Coffee Board are as follows:—

(i) the scheme is restricted only to the employees working in the Directorate of Marketing whose pay and allowances are met wholly or partially from out of the Poo! Fund.

(ii) The scheme is applicable to all the non-interchangeable staff of the Directorate of Marketing.

(iii) Employees.who haye completed 10 years of service or attained the age of 55 years are eligible to seek voluntary retirement.

Benefits payable are:

(i) Ex-gratia payment equivalent to three months (Pay+DA) for each completed year of service or monthly emoluments at the time of retirement multiplied by the balance months of service left before normal date of retirement, whichever is less.

(ii) Five year additional service weightage as admissible in the case of voluntary retirement is reckoned for the purpose of computation of benefits.

(iii) AU other normal benefits like pension, gratuity, commutation etc., are also paid as per the prevailing rules

(c) Voluntary Retirement Scheme was introduced in Coffee Board to reduce the manpower rendered surplus as a result of reduced marketing activity due to liberalisation of coffee marketing.

(d) A total number of 1686 employees were found surplus on account of-liberalisation of coffee policy and are eligible for availing Voluntary reitrement Scheme. A total number of 1322 employees have been relieved.

(e) Extension of implementation of Voluntary Retirement Scheme has no immetiate connection with the report of the Vth Pay Commission as the latter has been constituted only for Central Govt, employees.

Balance of Trade Position

1688. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of imports and exports during the first half of 1996-97 as compared to the same period during 1994-95 and 1995-96;

(b) the trade deficit during the first half of 1996-97 as compared to 1994-95 and 1995-96;

(c) the contribution of POL in the imports of the country during the above period; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to keep the balance of trade under control?